

Baltz key for success

SPORTS EDITOR
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For freshman Chris Baltz, it's all about meeting expectations: his coach's, his teammates' and his own.

Baltz started 13 of the team's 25 games and has been the team's leading scorer in the last 12 games with 174 points averaging 14.5 per game dating back to the Hartwick game on Jan. 19. Head coach Rob Kornaker expects the same success to continue for three more years.

"If he's not our leading scoring threat for the next three years, then I'll be very surprised," Kornaker said. "Chris has got a ton of potential to be one of the best players that has played here, at least that I've coached."

Since Kornaker's first year as head coach in the 2001-02 season, he has coached the likes of Jeff Sidney (2001-05), Sean O'Brien (2002-06) and Mike McGee (2002-06), who lie sixth, ninth and fifteenth, respectively, on Fisher's all-time career scoring list.

No pressure, Baltz. But it's not like Baltz hasn't met high expectations before. At Vestal High School, he led the team to Section IV Class AA titles in his final two years and a Southern Tier Athletic Conference title as a senior, was a two-time All-Conference and All-Metro selection and is the all-time leading scorer at Vestal with 1,294 points.

Perhaps achieving all those accolades in high school alleviates

some of the pressure, but for his new college career, Baltz has set higher expectations for himself and the team.

"I not only have high expectations for myself, but for the team," Baltz said. "I'm always going to set the highest possible goals for myself and will have to work hard to get there by devoting time to getting quicker and stronger. I think if I can mesh those things together with the skills I have, I hope I can turn out to be a pretty good player."

Baltz's senior teammates also see the work that he has put in to prepare himself for college basketball.

"I see a lot of potential in Chris' game," forward Dan Mueller said. "He is a good player now, and I still think that there is more to come in his future. He is a very good shooter and can score the basketball. With work on some other parts of his game, he will become the go-to-guy for Fisher in his next few years."

Center Dan McSweeney concurred with Mueller's comments.

"[Baltz] will be committed to the program from March to October which will go unnoticed by most," McSweeney said. "It's the little things during off-season time that makes good basketball players great. Baltz is going to be great. He plays hard, doesn't complain about anything and can take criticism."

Baltz did take some criticism earlier in the season. He was a spot starter in the beginning but his production started to drop.

It wasn't until he reached his career-high of 20 points against Hartwick on Jan. 19 that he got a look to go back into the starting lineup.

"I'm happy the way he hung in there after the dip in the beginning where he wasn't having a lot of success," Kornaker said. "It's a lot of pressure to come in your freshman year and be expected to be 'the guy.'"

Ever since, he's been a mainstay. At the end of the regular season he had the best free throw percentage, with a minimum of five attempts, making 22 out of 23 attempts (.957) and was fourth on the team in rebounds with 93. He also had 241 points, averaging 9.6 per game along with sinking 38 percent of his three-point shots.

His three-point shooting has drawn some comparisons to McGee's style. McGee ended his career as the all-time leader of three-point field goals with 240. Kornaker thinks that Baltz is more versatile.

"As good a player as McGee was I think Chris has the potential to be better because he's a lot more versatile as a scorer," Kornaker said. "Mike was a shooter first and he developed into a scorer. Chris can shoot it, put it down on the floor and get it to the basket a lot different ways than Mike did, but to be fair, we asked McGee to be a different player when he started."

Baltz was flattered by the comparisons.

"McGee is pretty high on some of the all-time records list here at Fisher so for [Kornaker] to think that much of me is a great honor," Baltz said. "I have a lot to do to live up to that. I'll just keep working hard and someday maybe those comparisons can be made."

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Brad Waters

Chris Baltz (30) shoots a three-pointer over a Morrisville defender.

Tubbs helps fill supporting role for Cardinals

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With such a young and inexperienced roster, the St. John Fisher women's basketball team were looking for a backbone. Sophomore starting point guard Meagan Tubbs help fill that role.

"She's always pushing everyone on the court and is always really positive," freshman center Mary Kate Comfort said. "She connects well with everyone on the team on and off the court and always creates a spark for us during games. She is a really great player and has a really great work ethic."

A native of Ticonderoga, N.Y., Tubbs has been dribbling a basketball since elementary school. The sophomore starter joined her first basketball team as a fifth grader.

"Both my parents were gym teachers so when I was growing up, sports were always around," Tubbs said. "I joined a traveling team in fifth grade and I haven't stopped playing since."

Tubbs was drawn to St. John Fisher because of the educational program, as well as the basketball program.

"I enjoy the excitement and I love having teammates," Tubbs said. "Competition is a big thing too."

Underclassmen don't always get the opportunity to see the court as a starter. Tubbs did not shy away from taking on the task

of being a starting point guard for the Cardinals. With the 2005-06 team graduating four out of five starting seniors, Tubbs was given the opportunity to display her talents on the court.

"I haven't really thought about being a starter," she replied. "I just go out and play hard. It's a lot of fun being out there."

Tubbs explained that the team has done well with such a young roster including 15 freshmen.

"They've exceeded my expectations," she said. "They're a great bunch of kids and I love every one of them. We'll only get better from here on out."

You couldn't ask for much more out of a sophomore starting point guard. In the 19 games she played this season, she played 393 minutes. Tubbs finished eighth on the team in points with 69 and averaged 3.6 points per contest.

Tubbs can make some plays too. She finished fourth on the team with 42 assists, averaging 2.2 assists per game. Tubbs ranked sixth on the team in field goal percentage. She has sunk 24 of 70 attempts posting a .343 field goal percentage.

Cardinal's head coach Phil Kahler was very pleased with the effort Tubbs gave to the team this season.

"Tubbs has done very well this season for us," Kahler said. "She has taken the responsibility of being the starting point guard."

Kahler explained Tubbs as be-

ing a "transition player." She is in the process of transitioning from high school basketball to the college game.

"We're expecting big things from her in her junior and senior years," Kahler said.

Kahler mentioned that potential can only be determined by how hard a person works for something.

"This goes for everything in life," Kahler said. "If you want something bad enough, you are going to work at it. In this case, Tubbs has it, it's there, and she just has to go get it."

Kahler said that academics are "always first." Tubbs clearly does not need to be reminded this as she made Academics All-East this season.

Tubbs took some time to relax outside of basketball.

"I never mind sitting around in front of the TV and relaxing," Tubbs said. "I love playing Guitar Hero."

Coach Kahler believes says that Tubbs is only going to improve as a basketball player in the years to come.

"There's always somebody that is going to work at it," Kahler said. "We are confident Tubbs will do it. She has got the ability."

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Meagan Tubbs shoots a mid-range jumper. Fisher lost to Utica 65-55.